



On Wednesday 23 July, young people from Toowoomba and beyond gathered to question what it means to be a leader. Uniting 111 participants, the 2014 Youth Leadership Conference sought to challenge the youths of Toowoomba to embrace their potential to make a difference in the lives of those around them and to embrace their ability to impact and change the world for the better.

Starting off with an inspiring and thought-provoking keynote speech from the remarkable Luke Terry, Executive Director of Toowoomba Clubhouse, the delegation was called to draw upon their unique passions and capacities as leaders. Following Luke's address, each participant took part in three workshops centered on the themes of 'Passion', 'Vision' and 'Service' – three of the most central elements of leadership in today's world. Each workshop built on the concepts addressed in the others, however the diverse backgrounds of the facilitators created unique and contrasting experiences within the sessions.



Sophie Ryan, Arts/Law student at the University of Queensland joined with Professor Peter Swannell, former Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Southern Queensland and Chairman of Empire Theatres Pty Ltd, to deliver a unique message about 'passion'. Mark Cecil, President of Future Leaders, a sub-committee of the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce led the 'vision' session. In a third session, Brett Rangiira, Senior Education Officer Curriculum for the Toowoomba Catholic Education Office, drew on twenty-five years of experience in educational leadership to explore with students the centrality of service in creating environments in which people flourish.

The unique nature of each workshop and the ideas explored within them are difficult to quantify in just a few words, but it can easily be said that the three sessions worked to remind students of their inherent capabilities to affect change within their societies and beyond. The response from students was excellent, with students making comments on evaluation sheets such as, "The conference really made me think about what I am doing with my life" and "When I attended the workshops I started to realise that I have a lot of passion and that that needs to be spoken about in public".



In the final session of the day, students were called upon to draw on the concepts explored in the workshops in 'The Way Forward', a session prompting students to initiate a change-making project in their community. A grant is available for the most 'effective' project thought of – proposals will be reviewed in the near future and the successful 'project' soon revealed. Stay tuned!

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